

PREFACE

The Country Profile on the Housing Sector of the Russian Federation started with a preparatory mission by the secretariat in April 2003. This was followed by a research mission of the international expert team in June 2003. The project's expenses were covered by extrabudgetary funds provided by the Governments of the Czech Republic, Finland, the Netherlands, Norway and the United Kingdom. The successful conclusion of the project would not have been possible without this generous support.

The previous studies in this series were on: Bulgaria, published in 1996; Poland, published in 1998 (ECE/HBP/107); Slovakia, published in 1999 (ECE/HBP/111); Lithuania, published in 2000 (ECE/HBP/117); Romania, published in 2001 (ECE/HBP/124); the Republic of Moldova, published in 2002 (ECE/HBP/125); Albania, published in 2003 (ECE/HBP/130); and Armenia, published in 2004 (ECE/HBP/132).

Other work carried out by UNECE in the Russian Federation includes a land administration review prepared in 2003 (HBP/2003/7 and Add.1). Three other UNECE projects related to housing may also prove useful to the Russian Federation and other countries in transition: (i) the Guidelines on condominium ownership of housing for countries in transition (ECE/HBP/123); (ii) the Guidelines on housing finance systems for countries in transition (forthcoming); and (iii) the Guidelines on social housing (forthcoming).

This Country Profile as well as the other publications mentioned above are available on the web site of the Committee on Human Settlements at <http://www.unece.org/env/hs/cph/welcome.html>.

The preparation of the Country Profile on the Housing Sector of the Russian Federation was a challenging task for the team of international experts. The size of the country and the complexity of its housing situation meant that the scope of the country profile needed to be clearly defined.

It was clear from the outset that the country profile needed to give an overview of the general framework conditions of the housing sector, but that it could not analyse each aspect of the Russian Federation's housing sector in detail. The challenge was, therefore, twofold:

- (1) To present a basic overview of the overall framework conditions of the Russian Federation's housing stock;
- (2) To identify those aspects that are fundamental to the Russian Federation's housing sector and which are to be analysed in detail.

In addition it was decided that the study would focus on urban housing. No research has been undertaken into rural housing.

During the preparatory mission discussions were held with various policy makers and practitioners within the housing sector, including representatives from different levels of the government as well as the private sector and non-governmental organizations, to identify those aspects that are particularly important to the Russian Federation's housing sector. It was decided that, in addition to describing the framework conditions of the housing sector, the identified aspects should be studied in detail.

This approach is reflected in the structure of the country profile. Part one of the study presents the framework conditions of the housing sector. Chapter I analyses the past decade's socio-economic transition and its impact on housing developments. Chapter II presents the recent developments with regard to housing reform and chapter III gives an overview of the features of the existing housing stock. The institutional structure of the Russian Federation's housing sector on the federal, regional and local level of government is analysed in chapter IV, the legal framework in chapter V and the financial framework in chapter VI.

Those aspects that were found to be particularly important are taken up in part two:

- The management and operation of the housing stock (chapter VII)
- Utilities (chapter VIII)
- Social housing (chapter IX)
- New construction and urban planning (chapter X)
- Land management and real property market development (chapter XI)

All chapters include conclusions and recommendations. The most important are included in the summary of conclusions and recommendations.

The aim of the country profile is to help policy makers and other stakeholders in the housing sector throughout the country. However, due to the large size of the country, it has not been possible to visit and carry out in-depth research in all regions. Field research has therefore been conducted in a selected number of regions. As the housing situation can never be seen independently from the overall economic development of a particular area, the regions were chosen because they represent the country's different socio-economic framework conditions as well as various problems and challenges within the housing stock. And while the team did not visit all the regions of the Russian Federation, it did use information from across the country.